

REMARKS

This Amendment cancels claims 18 - 29 and adds new claims 30 – 39.

The previously pending claims were rejected under various combinations of the following prior art references:

1. U.S. Patent No. 2,845,320 to Saunders et al. (hereinafter “Saunders”);
2. U.S. Patent No. 6,036,293 to Anell et al. (hereinafter “Anell”); and
3. U.S. Patent No. 6,471,313 to Ueda et al. (hereinafter “Ueda”).

The Saunders reference discloses a refrigerator cabinet where a door of the refrigerator is attached to a body of the refrigerator by a hinge connection. Saunders discloses that a hinge bracket 36 can be attached to the front wall 13 of a refrigerator using fasteners 37, as shown in Figure 4. Saunders discloses that the fasteners 37 would pass through the hinge bracket 36, through the front wall 13 of the refrigerator, and into a reinforcing plate 21 located behind the front wall 13. Saunders fails to disclose or suggest that any type of film or material layer would be located between the front wall 13 of the refrigerator and the reinforcing plate 21.

Anell discloses a refrigerator cabinet where a plurality of reinforcing members 64, 65, 68, 96 are positioned behind the front wall 32, 33, 23 of a refrigerator body 5. Anell discloses that the front wall of the refrigerator body can be attached to the reinforcing members by crimping or clinching. However, like Saunders, Anell also fails to disclose or suggest that any type of film or material layer would be positioned between the front wall of the cabinet and the reinforcing elements.

Ueda discloses a cabinet which can be used as part of a refrigerator. As shown in Figures 20-24 of Ueda, a cover plate 17 is mounted on the corners of rectangular openings on the front face of the cabinet. Ueda teaches a structure which uses a reinforcing 14 plate that is attached to the front wall 11 and rear

wall 12 via fasteners 15 that pass through holes 55 in the reinforcing plate 14 and holes 56 in the front wall 11 and rear wall 12. Ueda then covers the reinforcing plate 14 with the cover plate 17. Projections 22 on the rear face of the cover plate 17 are inserted into a large aperture 21 in the reinforcing plate 14 to mount the cover plate 17 in the corner of the opening.

Ueda teaches that one can place a piece of sponge rubber 51 between the walls 11, 12 of the cabinet and the reinforcing plate 14. The sponge rubber element is intended to seal any apertures in the structure. When the cover plate 17 is mounted on the structure, the protrusions 22 on the rear of the cover plate 17 cause deformation of the sponge rubber element 51. Because the sponge rubber element 51 is highly elastic, as shown in Figure 22, the sponge rubber element 51 is not pierced by the protrusions 22 on the cover plate 17. Instead, the elastic sponge rubber element 51 deforms inward to accommodate the protrusions 22.

Independent claim 30 recites a foam-filled hollow body which includes an inner wall, an outer wall, a reinforcing plate positioned on an inner side of the outer wall and a destructible layer positioned between the reinforcing plate and the outer wall. Claim 30 recites that the reinforcing plate is coupled to the outer wall by a clinch connection, and that the reinforcing plate has a hole therethrough, the hole in the reinforcing plate being aligned within the opening in the outer wall. Claim 30 further recites that the destructible layer is positioned so as to cover the hole in the reinforcing plate and the opening in the outer wall. Further, claim 30 recites that the destructible layer is formed of a substantially incompressible material. Finally, claim 30 recites that foam insulation is located between the inner wall and the outer wall, wherein the destructible layer prevents the foam insulation from escaping from the opening in the outer wall.

Claim 34 is also directed to a foam-filled hollow body. Claim 34 recites an inner wall and an outer wall, the outer wall having an opening therethrough. Claim 34 also recites a mounting plate positioned on an inner side of the outer

wall and coupled to the outer wall by a mechanical connection, the reinforcing plate having a threaded hole therethrough, the threaded hole in the reinforcing plate being aligned with the opening in the outer wall. Claim 34 also recites a destructible layer positioned between the reinforcing plate and the outer wall so as to cover the hole in the reinforcing plate and the opening in the outer wall, the destructible layer being formed of a substantially inelastic material. Finally, claim 34 recites foam insulation located between the inner wall and the outer wall, wherein the destructible layer prevents the foam insulation from escaping from the opening in the outer wall.

As noted above, neither Saunders nor Anell disclose or suggest putting any type of film or material layer between the outer wall of a refrigerator body and a reinforcing plate located behind the outer wall. Previous Office Actions have asserted that Ueda discloses this feature. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

As explained above, Ueda teaches the use of a sponge rubber element located underneath a cosmetic cover plate. Ueda teaches that the sponge rubber element should be highly elastic such that when projections on the rear of the cover plate extend down into an aperture between the inner and outer walls of the Ueda structure, the projections cause the sponge rubber element to elastically deform, rather than to break. This allows the Ueda structure to be fully assembled before foam insulation is injected into the structure. The fact that the highly elastic sponge rubber element does not break ensures that none of the foam insulation can leak from between apertures in the structure.

In contrast to what is disclosed in Ueda, claims 30 and 34 recite structures with a destructible layer formed of a substantially incompressible or substantially inelastic material. The destructible layer is located between an outer wall of the body and a reinforcing/mounting plate. The incompressible/inelastic nature of this destructible layer is necessary and important to ensure that the structure provides sufficient rigidity.

As explained in the present application, the reinforcing/mounting plate recited in claims 30 and 34 is used to attach a hinge bracket to the front face of the body. The hinge bracket supports a door on the front face of the body. To ensure that the hinge mechanism and the door can be rigidly and precisely attached to the front face of the body, it is necessary to rigidly attach the hinge bracket to the front wall and the reinforcing/mounting plate. And to ensure this rigid attachment of the hinge bracket to the body, the destructible layer must be formed of a substantially incompressible or inelastic material.

If one were to instead use a sponge rubber element, as taught by Ueda, it would be impossible to rigidly attach the hinge bracket and door of the front of the cabinet. Use of the Ueda sponge rubber element would result in the hinge bracket and door being movable with respect to the body, which could result in misalignment of the door with respect to the opening on the front face of the cabinet. Further, it appears that continued movement of the hinge bracket and door with respect to the body, as the door is opened and closed, would likely cause deterioration and ultimately destruction of the sponge rubber element. And this would lead to even greater misalignment of the door with respect to the opening on the front face of the cabinet.

Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art, viewing the Ueda reference, would not have been motivated to replace Ueda's sponge rubber element with an incompressible or inelastic material layer. Ueda teaches that the elastic aspects of his sponge rubber element are important in ensuring that no apertures are created when the Ueda cover plate is pressed into place. Ueda specifically teaches that the sponge rubber element must be able to stretch to accommodate the projections on the rear of the cover plate. Thus, Ueda specifically teaches against the use of an inelastic material layer.

It is respectfully submitted that it requires the impermissible use of hindsight, in view of Applicant's invention, to find any motivation to replace

Ueda's highly elastic sponge rubber element with a layer of a substantially inelastic/incompressible material.

For all the above additional reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the structures recited in claims 30 and 34 are neither disclosed nor obvious in view of references of record. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 30 and 34 are allowable.

Claims 31-33 depend from claim 30, and claims 35-39 depend from claim 34. It is respectfully submitted that the dependent claims are also allowable over the references of record for at least the reasons discussed above. Also, the dependent claims recite additional features which are also not shown or suggested by the references of record.

For instance, claims 31 and 37 recite that a clinch connection attaches the outer wall to the reinforcing plate/mounting plate. These claims further recite that a portion of the destructible layer at the clinch connection is broken off and driven into a recess in the reinforcing/mounting plate. None of the references of record disclose or suggest this type of an arrangement.

In addition, claims 33 and 39 further recite a hinge plate which is attached to the outer wall by a fastener passing through the opening in the outer wall, the fastener being coupled to the hole in the reinforcing/mounting plate, wherein the fastener pierces the destructible layer. As noted above, in the only reference which discloses the use of a material layer between a reinforcing plate and an outer wall, which is the Ueda reference, the material layer is formed of an elastic material which is specifically designed so that it is not pierced by any type of fastener.

It is respectfully submitted that the dependent claims are also allowable for these additional reasons.

In view of the foregoing, entry of the present Amendment and allowance of claims 30-39 are respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions regarding the Amendment, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned

at the telephone number listed below. If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Howard', is written over the printed name.

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